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FM AMEMBASSY BEIJING
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4141
INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIJING 007575

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/20/2027

TAGS: PREL PGOV CH JN

SUBJECT: PM FUKUDA,S VISIT TO CHINA STILL IN THE PLANNING STAGES

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson. Reasons 1. 4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) Preparations for Japan Prime Minister Fukuda's upcoming official visit to Japan are underway even though the dates of the visit and the agenda have yet to be agreed, MFA Asian Affairs Department Japan Division Deputy Director Lu Guijun told Poloff on December 19. Lu said the notional agenda includes discussion of President Hu's upcoming visit to Japan, economic cooperation, cultural and student exchanges, Taiwan and the East China Sea territorial dispute.

¶2. (C) Japanese Embassy First Secretary Katsutoshi Takeda told Poloff that PM Fukuda is expected to visit China December 27-30, spending two days in Beijing and two days in the "countryside," most likely visiting the industrial port city of Tianjin and Shandong Province.

¶3. (C) Lu said China hopes PM Fukuda's visit will promote "positive and constructive" bilateral relations. China-Japan relations are "pretty good," he said, except for three issues: the East China Sea territorial dispute, Taiwan and historical issues. Of these three, Lu stated, Taiwan is the most important to China, while the East China Sea is most important to Japan. He characterized both issues as long standing and complicated, and unlikely to be resolved during PM Fukuda's visit. Reaching agreement on the East China Sea dispute prior to PM Fukuda's visit was never a pre-condition for the visit, he said.

¶4. (C) Lu told us he was unsure why Japan proposed visits to Tianjin and Shandong. Japanese Embassy First Secretary Akira Yokochi said visits to these locations were proposed in order to highlight positive attributes of both countries' shared history and economic cooperation. Shandong is the birthplace of Confucius and the location of a temple complex devoted to commemorating Confucius' legacy, he said. A visit there will emphasize both countries' shared ancient history rooted in Confucian culture. Japan proposed Tianjin because numerous Japanese companies are doing business there. According to Yokochi, by stopping in Tianjin, PM Fukuda will emphasize Japan and China,s strong economic relationship.

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